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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000291

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 028 (02/23/04)

Classified by DCM James F. Entwistle for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

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No Meeting with CBK

1. (C) The Ambassador's call on the President did not come through February 23. She was up-country most of the day. We will reinvigorate the request when the Ambassador returns from the Maldives (see below) and in the meantime brief some of her key advisors.

Ambassador and Team to Maldives

2. (U) Ambassador departs Tuesday morning Feb 24 for Maldives. He will do calls in Male on Feb 25, visit a non-resort atoll on Feb 26 day, then host our national day reception Feb 26 evening. Also in Male for all or part of that time will be Datt Rich Girven, GSO Jim Stover, PAO Bruce Lohof, Econ/Comm Dean Thompson, and Consular Dave Williams.

Ambassador will stay on in Maldives Friday through Sunday Feb 29, back afternoon of Feb 29. He will be available by cellphone while in the Maldives. DCM will be in Colombo throughout.

Indian High Commissioner Views

3. (C) Ambassador had lunch with Indian High Commissioner Sen on Feb 20, where Sen was quite candid (and sometimes even believable). According to Sen:

--The dissolution of Parliament is Ranil's fault. He was not flexible enough, should have taken the deal (which Sen was brokering) to accept control of military theater commands.

--Nonetheless, a CBK victory would be a disaster and the JVP was awful. Therefore India was actively working to help Ranil. India had convinced Ceylon Workers Congress leader Thondaman to cooperate with Ranil, and had done the same with Muslim leader Athaullah. (Comment: Next day's papers showed a smiling Athaullah signing cooperation MOU with CBK. Guess Sen's powers of persuasion are not as powerful as he thought.)

--Impossible to predict the election.

--After the election, India should tell GSL (whoever that is) and LTTE to make an agreement and stick to it. If either side broke the agreement, India would come down on them militarily!

--When reminded India had tried this before (IPKF in 1980's) with dismal results, Sen said Indian capabilities were much better now, and beside, the IPKF had had the Tigers on the run when they were betrayed by VP Singh who agreed to pull them out. A few more months and they could have finished the job.

Throughout Sen evinced that disdain for lesser creatures (the Sri Lankans) that those who have sat through interminable lectures in South Block are all too familiar with. At various points he quoted Abraham Lincoln, Tacitus, Browning and Yeats.

Donor Lunch

4. (SBU) Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattsker hosted donor lunch Feb 23 following his return from Washington co-chairs

meeting. Highlights:

ELECTIONS:

--All present agreed we should be neutral with regard to parties in current election, but not to policies. Emphasize need to support peace process.

--Brattsker would travel to Kilinocchi on Feb 25 to brief LTTE on co-chairs meeting.

--LTTE has indicated they want polls open in the Vanni, said would welcome international and local observers. Ambassador stressed need to tell LTTE they needed to act properly and not coerce nominating process. Elections would appear fair but be meaningless if only one Tamil candidate (hand-picked by Tigers with others intimidated into not running) were available to voters. Brattsker said he would deliver the message about the need for "political space."

--EU will decide in next two days whether or not to send monitoring team. If decision is yes, members will start to arrive shortly. Commonwealth also deciding.

--Other donors have contributed funds to Pafrel and other local election monitors. Gap still exists and US hopes to fill it.

--Donors agreed to coordinate their local staff monitoring so as to avoid overlap.

ASSISTANCE

--IMF and World Bank will have Board meetings end of next week, expect to issue statements on Sri Lanka referring to peace process and economic policies. Statements will be "forthright." Good opportunity to make impact in Sri Lanka. Donors who want input into the statement(s) should give their suggestions early to Fund/Bank staff.

--Ambassador pushed once again a public relations strategy which would include release of assistance figures for 2003 (and perhaps earlier years) showing over \$1 billion disbursed in '03, with significant amounts to North and East. World Bank agreed to set up an event, with participation by all three MDB's and co-chairs.

--In recent visits to European capitals, LTTE pushed for direct funding. All donors (Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Norway) told them this was impossible, wanted a NERF-like mechanism.

--World Bank has proposed to Tigers a NERF-like mechanism in which LTTE, NGO's and GSL could each put up development proposals to a World Bank Secretariat. Proposals would need to be agreed by both sides, after which they would be evaluated for Trust Fund funding by a Donor Coordinating Committee. (US would not participate as we would not put money into such a Trust Fund. Idea is still important to us as it would allow other funding to move forward.)

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION UPDATE

15. (C) FYI. Politicians continued their maneuverings over the weekend and we offer below the latest tidbits on the upcoming parliamentary election:

-- With the week-long nomination period officially ending on February 24, parties are busy finalizing their candidates for each electoral district and the national list. We will let you know who has aligned with whom, once the dust settles.

-- You will see our front-channel today on weekend changes and cross overs that occurred in the Muslim bloc.

-- Ronnie de Mel, a senior MP who was most recently in the President's party, created news again on February 21 by announcing switching parties and would contest his southern electoral district as a United National Party (UNP) candidate. We had earlier reported de Mel's vehement denial of rumors indicating he would cross over to the UNP. President Kumaratunga was apparently not too pleased with de Mel's decision, wishing him well in his "checker political endeavors."

-- The chief monks of two leading Buddhist sects, Asgiriya and Malwatte, in the country have publicly expressed their disapproval for the Sihala Urumaya party's intention to field a Buddhist monk-only slate for parliamentary elections. Citing their distress and concern, the two Buddhist leaders warned that monks should act in advisory and spiritual capacities to those who govern. (POL)

TRANSLATING THE HRR INTO LOCAL LANGUAGES?

16. (SBU) We noticed that the cable highlighting public diplomacy methods related to the release of the annual human rights report (State 37213) mentions a new Congressional requirement that all reports be translated into the local languages. For us, that means Sinhala and Tamil for the Sri Lankan report and Dhivehi for the Maldivian one. Would the bureau please check with DRL to confirm this requirement, as well as SA/PD to see if they are involved in any translations. Thanks. (POL)

DMI? PSI?

17. (C) We were wondering about the Department's Dangerous Material Initiative (DMI), as outlined in State 33733. It is unclear whether it is an action request for all posts, or only Bangkok, Beijing, Singapore, and New Delhi. Further, we are curious as to how this complements the on-going Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) that the Department is also overseeing. Finally, we heard from our counterparts at the French Embassy that they have a joint demarche instruction on PSI to be done possibly with us and/or the EU members. We have not seen anything here on that front. Would the bureau please check if there is any joint demarche on the horizon? (POL)

Schlosser Visit

18. (U) We're looking forward to seeing John later this week and have put together an encyclopedic program for him. (DCM)

LUNSTEAD